

**ABSTRACT**

A method for controlling distribution of network communications (messages).

An incoming message either carries priority information, or is assigned priority information based on a shared characteristic with other messages. The priority information is used to determine how and/or when to deliver the message, e.g. by delaying the message for a fixed time. Preferences for receipt of messages by priority level may be communicated to upstream hosts along a network path. Accordingly, an intermediary host may reject and/or delay messages that the intended recipient does not wish to receive. This pushes the burden of low-priority messages back to the sender, thereby reducing or eliminating burdens on network/system resources of the recipient and/or intermediaries between the recipient and the sender. Accordingly, it can "squench" spam messages at or close to their source. Trusted senders complying with prescribed practices may include priority information allowing for delivery of their messages with higher priority.